

Any stimulus bill must be fiscally responsible and provide assistance to families and small businesses experiencing the effects of the recession. The bill we are considering today, as did the previous versions, includes provisions that I strongly support, but these positive elements cannot make up for its fundamental flaws. Those positive elements, include providing a supplemental rebate to those who received only a partial or no rebate as a result of last spring's tax cut, providing small businesses a bonus depreciation of 30 percent over 3 years, and reducing the recovery period for making improvements to leased properties. Additionally, I support a permanent rate cut for low- and moderate-income earners.

In addition, I strongly support extending unemployment benefits to the approximately 2 million Americans who have lost their jobs as a result of the recession and the September 11 attacks. In the middle of March, those individuals and families who have lost their jobs because of the attacks of September 11 will begin losing their unemployment benefits. We also need to include provisions that assist families in continuing their health care coverage. We must pass a bill that provides substantial relief to those families, and will get to the President's desk. Unfortunately, this bill does not provide that help.

Moreover, this bill virtually eliminates the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) liability for the Nation's largest and wealthiest corporations. The AMT is designed to ensure that corporations cannot avoid paying their fair share using deductions to entirely eliminate all or almost all of their tax liability. The bill before us today would allow corporations to claim deductions against their AMT liability that they currently are not allowed to take. This will provide little, if any, stimulus to the economy, but will certainly exacerbate the budget difficulties we now face. Worse yet, the bill pays for this corporate AMT tax giveaway by taking the funds from the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds.

In this time of budget deficits we cannot and must not continue to raid the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds to pay for tax cuts for wealthy corporations. Over the past few weeks, many have spoken of protecting our Nation's economic security. I suggest that passing legislation that threatens the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds threatens the very foundation of our economic security.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to pass a bill that provides fiscally responsible stimulus to our economy and relief to displaced workers. Unfortunately, the bill before us today will both further extend the deficits we are facing and also deplete the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. Long-term economic security depends on long-term fiscal responsibility. We owe our citizens a bill that provides a short-term stimulus, substantial assistance to the unemployed, and ensures long-term growth. The bill before us today fails to meet all three of these standards.

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the state of the economy and jobs. In June, July, and August when we passed the first stimulus bill, we were all hoping that if we dipped into recession at all that we would have a soft landing. September 11 changed all that. When we saw those planes crash into the towers in New York and the planes crash in Pennsylvania and here in Washington, DC, we saw and felt a shudder through the American economy.

It was not only travel and tourism that was hurt, but also consumer confidence. For 5 consecutive months after September 11, consumer confidence fell. But we are coming back. Consumer confidence rose for the second consecutive month in 2002, and we need to encourage this growth by passing an economic security bill.

In October, the President called for a stimulus package and the House of Representatives responded. We passed a second one in December. We are now working on our third. The other body will not even let a vote be taken on the issue. The economic stimulus bills in the House are not perfect. There are things about them I did not like as an individual legislator. There is almost no bill here that everybody can say, "By gosh, that's something that I can support a hundred percent. There's not a work that I would change." It is not the nature of this body, but we moved the bills forward. We moved the process along for a good reason.

Since September 11, over 1 million Americans have lost their jobs. We have over 1 million families who are worried about where the next paycheck will come from. All of those families are worried about their health insurance. What if they do not get another job before that COBRA runs out? What happens if the unemployment benefits run out? What happens if we do not get back to growing jobs in this country? Those families are hurting and we need to help them. Last year we passed an economic stimulus bill in the House that provided 13 weeks of extended benefits to those who have lost their jobs, and today we will again pass another stimulus bill with that exact same measure.

What do we want to see in an economic stimulus bill? Certainly first and foremost, we need to create capital to create jobs. Most of the jobs created in this country are created by small business. That means we have to include provisions like accelerated depreciation in the stimulus bill. As a former small business owner I was always amazed when I did my books at the end of the year, figuring out what my profit or loss was and how much corporate tax I had to pay. One year I bought new computers for my entire office, costing me about \$20,000 to \$30,000 for the new computer system. Under section 179, I was only able to claim \$10,000, even though I paid that business expense. That did not seem right, or fair and it certainly discouraged me from getting \$35,000 worth of computers at one time. Certainly one of the things we need to do for small business is to raise those limits so that a small business looking at buying equipment, going and doing some construction, or expanding their computer setup, can do so. This will stimulate our economy and create jobs.

The second thing we are going to need to do is extend health care benefits and unemployment benefits so that people who have lost their jobs due to the slowdown in the economy can make it through. All of us know neighbors who are worried about losing their job sometime this year and all of us are willing to say, "Look, we're going to help you over the hump. We're going to make sure that this awful time for you is not made worse because you can't feed your family or that you lost your health insurance." So, we must have health care coverage and unemployment insurance extenders in any economic stimulus bill.

The third thing our economic stimulus bill has to do is restore consumer confidence.

About two-thirds of the American economy comes from consumer spending. We need to continue to restore confidence in the public so that we do not have a further collapse in retail sales. We have to restore faith in consumers and in the markets. If you talk to people about their retirement plans, most Americans now have 401(k)s or IRAs or pension plans. We are now investors in the stock market. One hundred million Americans own stocks, mostly in IRAs and 401(k)s, pension plans through work of Thrift Savings accounts. All of us have seen the value of our retirement savings go way down because of the economic slowdown. We need to reestablish confidence in the stock market, turn our economy around, and get back to creating jobs.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deep disappointment in the bill before us today.

Today, we had the opportunity to follow the lead of the Senate by passing a 13-week extension for Americans who have been unable to find work but whose unemployment benefits have run out. I have received many, many letters from constituents who are concerned about losing their homes, paying for their health bills, and buying food for their children. Today, we had the opportunity to help them by passing the Senate provision and sending it to the President's desk. Instead, the Republican leadership chose to play politics with the lives of unemployed persons and their families, once again putting forth a bill that they know cannot be enacted into law.

In the last quarter of 2001, nearly 860,000 unemployed men and women exhausted their unemployment benefits. In December alone unemployment benefits ran out for 300,000 workers. In my State of Illinois, 42,299 workers exhausted their benefits in the last 3 months of last year—an increase of 88 percent from the previous year. Faced with serious fiscal pressures, no state has stepped forward to extend assistance as they have in the past. Hundreds of thousands of Americans are now struggling to pay their bills as they look for work in the middle of a recession.

I believe that we need a real economic stimulus plan and that we can do a great deal more than we're doing to create jobs and prevent additional layoffs. We should be providing assistance to States, funding the construction and repair of housing and schools, expanding transportation options, and investing in clean water projects. We should be assisting laid-off workers and their families and obtaining affordable health coverage through COBRA and Medicaid.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't agree with those job stimulus proposals. They would rather give money to the wealthy and mega-corporations than invest in targeted and proven job creation initiatives. They would rather provide unemployed men and women with an insufficient tax voucher than guarantee health coverage through Medicaid.

We disagree on those questions and it will take time to resolve them. In the meantime, we should take a simple action today. We should pass a 13-week benefits extension that will provide immediate relief to over 1 million workers.

We could take that step. Sadly for this institution and tragically for those workers, the House leadership has decided it would rather make a political point than make a difference in people's lives.